CLAIMS

1. A method of automatically composing a media article comprising:

analysing digital metadata associated with a first set of stored media data, which digital metadata includes:

related set identity data identifying a second set of stored media data; and

relationship data which indicates the relationship between what is represented by the first set of stored media data and what is represented by the second set of stored media data; and

arranging said first and second sets of stored media data in a media article in accordance with said analysis.

2. A method according to claim 1 further comprising generating said set identity data and said relationship data.

3. A method according to claim 1 wherein said metadata further comprises content data indicating what is represented by said sets of stored media data, said method further comprising the step of selecting, from a plurality of sets of stored media data, one or more sets of stored media data in dependence upon said content data, said one or more sets including said first and second sets of stored media data.

4. A method according to claim 3 comprising:

making a plurality of such selections; and

concatenating the results of said selections.

5. A method according to any preceding claim wherein said arranging step arranges said sets of stored media data so as to determine whether the user sees or hears what is represented by the first set of stored media data before or after he sees or hears what is represented by the second set of stored media data.

6. A method according to any preceding claim in which said set of stored media data contains video data.

7. A media article composition apparatus comprising:

one or more memory devices storing, for each of a plurality of sets of stored media data, metadata including relationship data indicating one or more relationships between the content represented in said set of stored media data and the content represented in one or more other sets of stored media data; and

one or more digital processors in communication with said one or more memory devices and arranged in operation to compose a media article by arranging said sets of stored media data or identifiers thereof in accordance with said relationship data.

8. An apparatus according to claim 7 in which said relationship data indicates a causal relationship between what is represented by one of said sets of stored media data and what is represented by another of said sets of stored media data.

9. An apparatus according to claim 7 wherein said one or more processors is further arranged in operation to provide a user with an interface enabling the user to enter said relationship data.

10. An apparatus according to claim 9 wherein:
said metadata is stored in a database; and
said one or more processors are further arranged in operation to query said database to obtain identifiers of sets of stored media data whose metadata meets one or more conditions specified in said query.

11. An apparatus according to claim 10 in which said database comprises an object-oriented database and metadata for each set of stored media data is stored as an object in said object-oriented database.

12. An apparatus according to claim 11 in which said relationship data is stored as data which defines the relationships between objects in the database.

13. An apparatus according to claim 12 in which membership of a set is indicated by each member of the set inheriting from a container object.

14. An apparatus according to claim 7 further comprising a content store storing a plurality of sets of stored media data, said metadata for each set of stored media data including a pointer to the location of said set of stored media data in said content store.

15. An apparatus according to claim 7 wherein:

said one or more memories further store one or more media element selection criteria; and

said one or more processors are further arranged in operation to receive a set of media element identifiers and select said input set by selecting a subset of media element identifiers in accordance with said selection criteria;

16. An apparatus according to claim 15 wherein:

said one or more media element selection criteria comprise a set of template data, each of said sets of template data listing a plurality of slots to be filled, and, for each slot, one or more associated requirements of media elements for filling said slot; and

said one or more processors are further arranged in operation to provide said subset by, for each of said slots, retrieving one or more identifiers of media elements whose metadata accords with said one or more requirements for said slots.